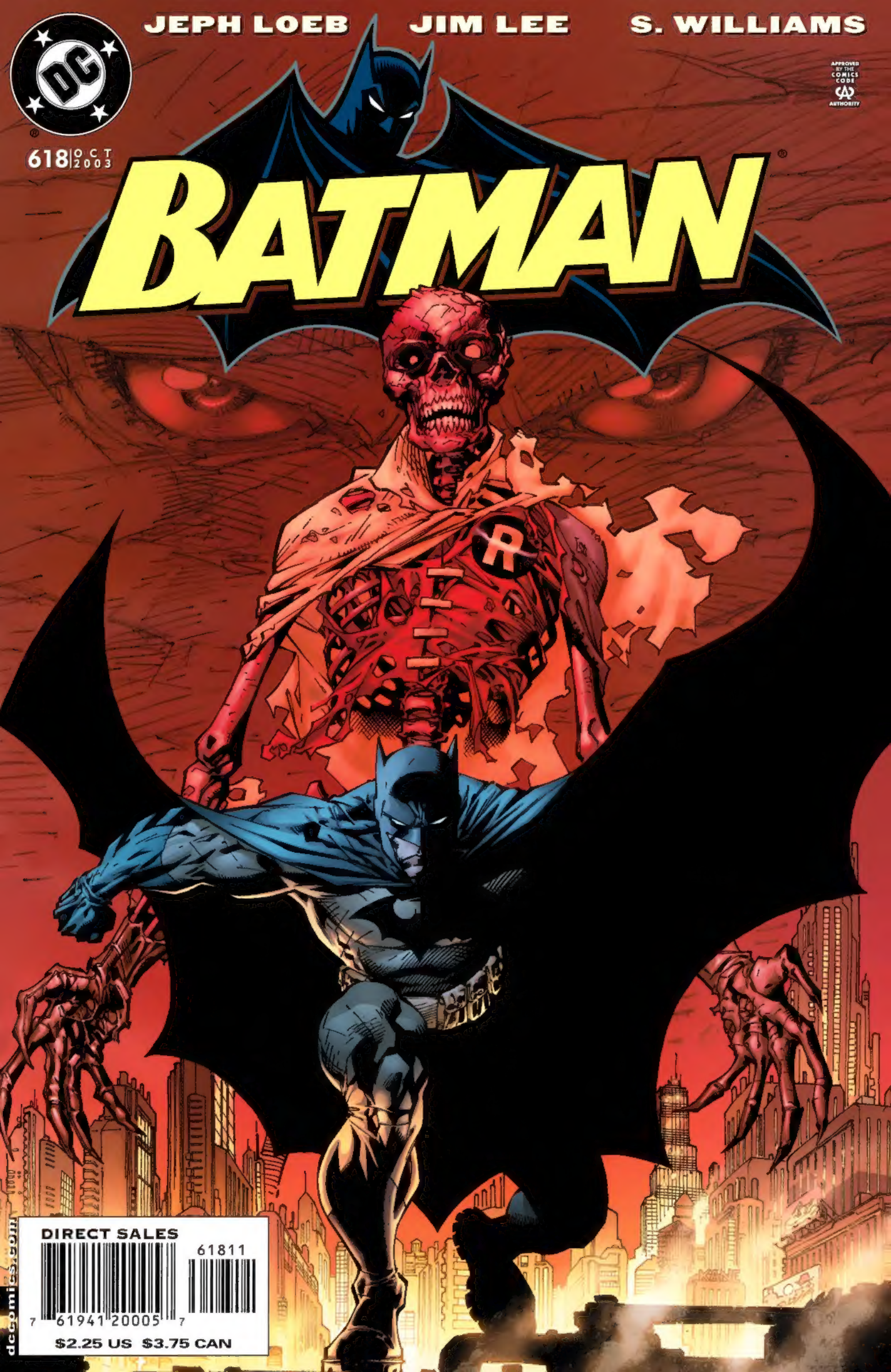
JEPH LOEB
JIM LEE
S. WILLIAMS
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
618 OCT 2003
BATMAN
DIRECT SALES
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$2.25 US $3.75 CAN
dccomics.com

Jason Todd is dead.
The Joker killed him years ago.
However, it is not impossible for the dead to come back to life.
I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING.
YOU'RE THINKING ABOUT WHEN I DIED.
HOW THERE'S BLOOD ON YOUR HANDS BECAUSE YOU COULDN'T GET THERE IN TIME TO STOP THE JOKER FROM KILLING ME.
Superman died.
Green Arrow died.
And they are alive today.
Jason was buried here.
The grave is empty.
His corpse is gone.
KEEPING SILENT. GATHERING YOUR THOUGHTS. HOPING TO RATTLE YOUR OPPONENT.
I'LL MAKE IT SIMPLE FOR YOU.
YOU'VE GOT TO GET TO ME --
--BEFORE I SLIT THIS PRETENDER'S THROAT.
TELL ME, BATMAN. YOU LET ONE ROBIN DIE.
WANT TO GO FOR TWO?

TAKE HIM.
NO!
Ra's al Ghul has something he calls a "Lazarus Pit."
The pit has certain... properties... that can restore life to the dead.
According to Ra's—who could be lying—someone took advantage of one of the pits' healing energies.
KRUSSH
CATWOMAN.
I TOLD YOU TO STAY WITH THE HUNTRESS.
COULDN'T LET SOMEONE ELSE CLIP THE LITTLE BIRD'S WINGS.
I DIDN'T KNOW YOU CARED.
I DON'T. BUT IF SOMETHING HAPPENED TO YOU, HED BE HELL TO LIVE WITH...
As with most things, using the Lazarus Pit comes at a price.
Upon emergence from the pit, madness fuels the survivor.
BAM
You enter dead. You come out insane.

The terrible irony is that when Jason died...
DID YOU THINK YOU COULD TAKE ME WITH ONE PUNCH?
BDFF
...in the madness of grief...
WUP
THIS WAS ALWAYS OUR PROBLEM.
...I actually considered ...
YOU SAW ME AS SECOND-RATE.
DOK
...putting Jason in a Lazarus Pit myself.
THWAK
NOT BEING ABLE TO BE AS GOOD AS THE "OTHER" ROBIN!

I made a promise on the grave of my parents to rid this city of the evil that took their lives. By day, I am Bruce Wayne, billionaire philanthropist. At night, criminals, a cowardly and superstitious lot, call me...
BATMAN
CREATED BY BOB KANE
HUSH
Chapter Eleven
THE GAME
HOW COULD YOU LET ME DIE?
I would have done anything to save Jason's life.
Jeph LOEB writes
Jim LEE pencils
Scott WILLIAMS inks
Richard STARKINGS letters
Alex SINCLAIR colors
Bob SCHRECK edits
Michael WRIGHT associate edits
special thanks to Mark CHIARELLO

C'MON! FIGHT ME!
But I came to my senses in time.
The trauma to the boy's head was so severe, even if the Pit could revive him --
-- there was no guarantee he would be capable of rational thought.
YOU OWE ME THAT.
SHOW ME SOME RESPECT--
-- SO I CAN WIN THIS GAME, BATMAN.
YOU'D BE AMAZED BY THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO WANTED TO PLAY.
WHO WERE WILLING TO RISK IT ALL FOR A TASTE OF --
KLK
--REVENGE--
AARGH!
CHUK

OOOPH
WHAM
THANK YOU.
FWAK
YOU JUST MADE IT SO MUCH EASIER--
THUP
-- TO KILL YOU.
IT'S GAME OVER.
SNAP
Once again, my unknown enemy refers to this as a game.
Recruiting Poison Ivy, Killer Croc, Harley Quinn, The Joker, Scarecrow and possibly...
...Catwoman.
IF YOU ARE WHO YOU SAY YOU ARE --
They all have extraordinary intel on my personal life.
To bring Jason into this...
Alive and arrogant as ever.
The unexpected joy that he could have lived to be this age...
...the same age as Nightwing...

-- THEN YOU ALREADY KNOW.
THINKING WHAT WE DO IS A GAME IS WHAT GOT ROBIN KILLED.
My opponent is counting on Jason's appearance to affect my abilities.
Play on whatever guilt I harbor for Jason's death...
TRYING TO GET ME ANGRY BY DOUBTING WHO I AM.
THINKING THAT WILL MAKE ME SLOPPY.
KRAK
THAK
CHOKK
SWOOSH
MISSED. FORGOT HOW MUCH YOU TAUGHT ME?

His coordination. His speed. The acrobatics.

PHTOOM
It's all... too familiar.

YOU HAVE TO LET HIM DO THIS ALONE.
TAKE YOUR HAND OFF OF ME.
I DON'T "HAVE" TO DO ANYTHING. PARTICULARLY WHEN IT COMES FROM YOU.
JUST LISTEN TO ME-- PLEASE.
THE ENTIRE TIME I'VE BEEN ROBIN --
--EVERY LESSON --EVERY MOVE THAT BATMAN HAS TAUGHT ME --
-- IS INTENDED TO KEEP WHAT HAPPENED TO JASON FROM HAPPENING TO ME.

NO MATTER WHAT HE SAYS, JASON'S DEATH STILL HAUNTS HIM.
WHY ELSE WOULD HE KEEP JASON'S COSTUME SO PROMINENTLY IN THE CAVE?
THEN YOU SHOULD KNOW BETTER THAN ANYONE, KID--
-- WHAT HE'S LIKE WHEN HE'S ANGRY.
ASK YOURSELF, BOY WONDER --
-- WHAT'S HE GOING TO DO IF HE FINDS OUT THAT IT'S NOT JASON TODD COME BACK TO HAUNT HIM?

Bottom line... Jason was never this good.
I HAVE TO ADMIT, I'M A LITTLE DISAPPOINTED.
I MEAN, I KNOW YOU WERE DISTRACTED BY GETTING A LITTLE ACTION WITH CATWOMAN.
THEN, THE DEATH OF TOMMY ELLIOT REALLY PUSHED YOUR BUTTONS.
THAK
CHOK
CHOK
GOING AFTER THE JOKER-- RA'S AL GHUL--
--EVERYBODY BUT THE RIGHT SOMEBODY.
C'MON, BATMAN -- IT WAS RIGHT IN FRONT OF YOU THE ENTIRE TIME.
JUST LIKE THE PURLOINED LETTER-- EDGAR ALLAN POE'S STORY --
THE VERY FIRST DETECTIVE STORY.
REMEMBER? SOMEONE CUT YOUR BATLINE?
The Purloined Letter -- when the answer is in plain sight.

It was a batarang.
I cannot always collect them at a crime scene.
It was by design that I landed in Crime Alley.
Where we first met.
Where Jason was stealing...
...the left front tire of the Batmobile.
The same one that blew out chasing Killer Croc.
PUTTING ALL THE CLUES TOGETHER, HUH?
CAN'T SAY I DIDN'T GIVE YOU A SPORTING CHANCE.
YOU MAY HAVE A LOT OF FACTS.
PERSONAL HISTORY. ANECDOTES.
YOU MAY EVEN HAVE SET UP ALL THOSE INCIDENTS TO ECHO WHAT HAPPENED IN THE PAST.
BUT...

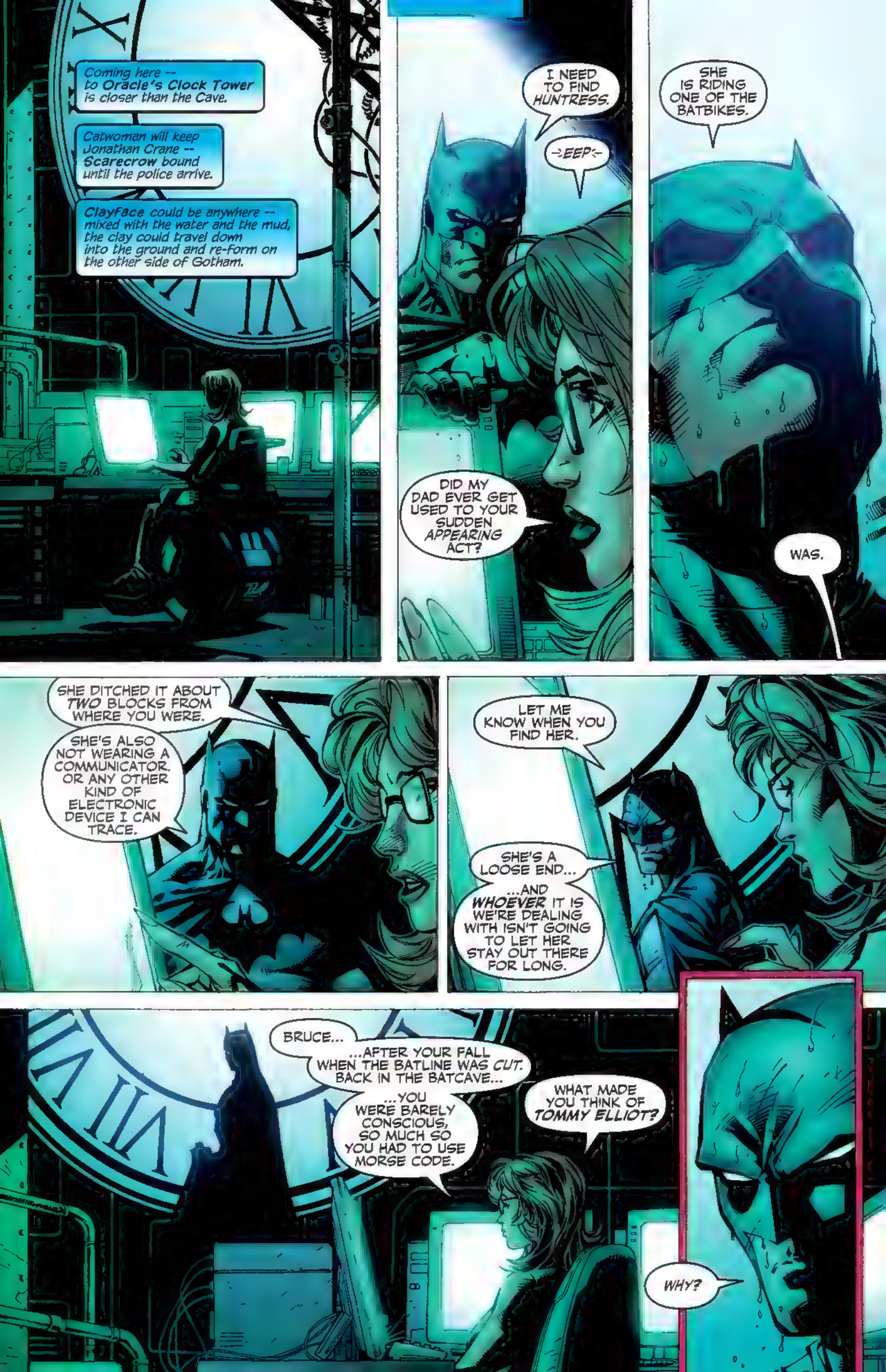
YOU ARE NOT THE ROBIN WHO DIED.
To make it perfect... for me to truly believe that this was Jason...
...he would have called me "Bruce."
Whoever orchestrated this -- and I believe that person knows -- withheld my secret identity.

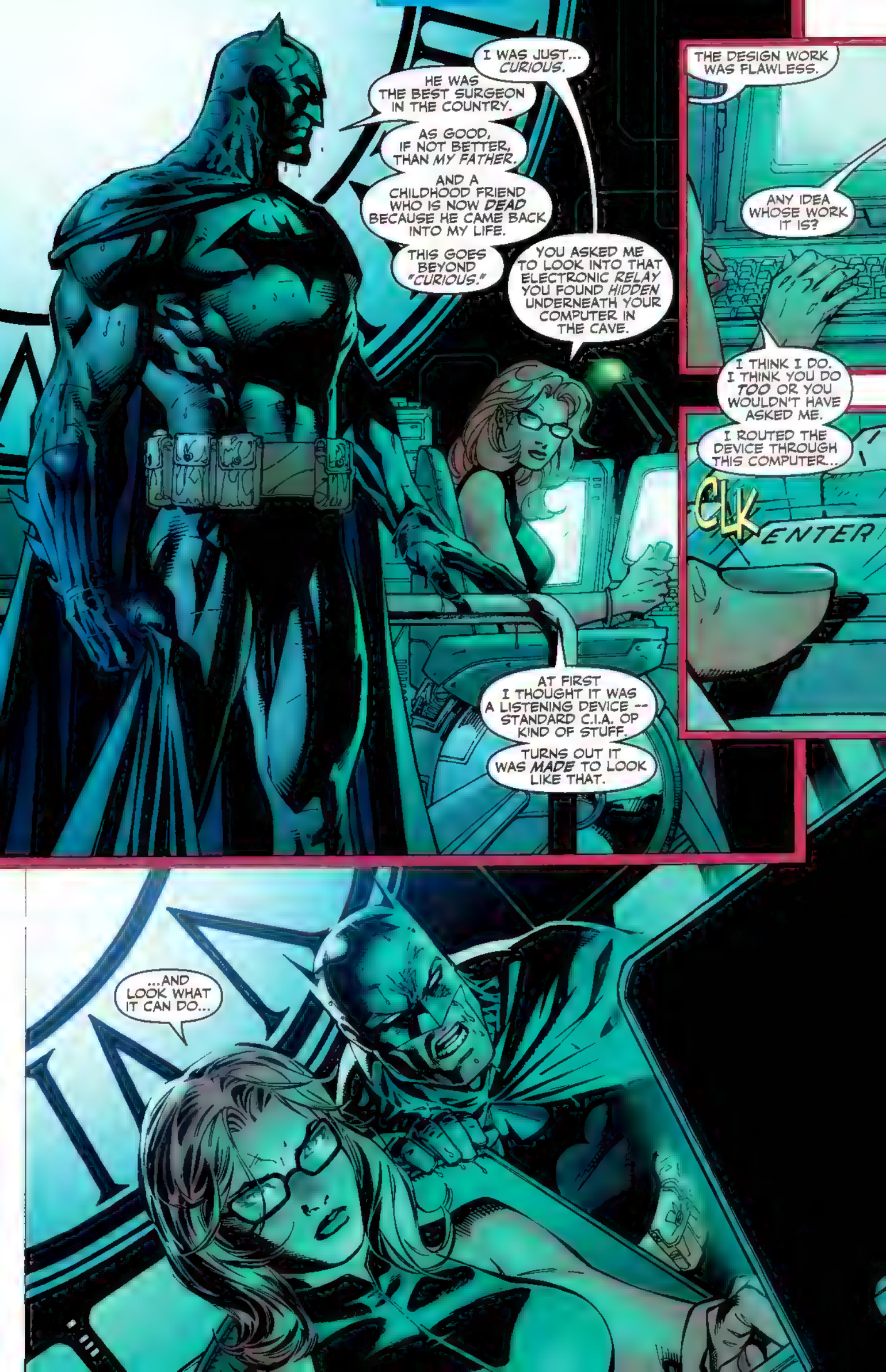
YOU VIOLATED A CHILD'S GRAVE.
THRAK
NO-- I--
REFERRED TO ROBIN AS THE PRETENDER WHEN IT WAS YOU WHO WAS PRETENDING.
WHAK
.. YOU HAD FORGOTTEN ME...
HOPING THAT YOUR APPEARANCE WOULD MAKE ME PULL MY PUNCHES.
BTAK
..I ONLY WANTED TO BE LOVED, BATMAN...
THAT WAS THE MISTAKE YOU MADE.

EVEN IN THE END... JASON KNEW HOW MUCH I LOVED HIM.
I could never forget you...
It is even possible that this impostor did not know that Jason Todd was Robin.
He could have been told to put on a costume and come to this open grave. Given what to say... up to a point.
He never referred to himself as "Jason"... and I never called him that either.
CLAY.
WHEN DID YOU KNOW?

THAT IT WASN'T JASON?
I DIDN'T AT FIRST. THE CLUES LED ME TO BELIEVE THAT A LAZARUS PIT HAD BEEN USED AND JASON COULD HAVE BEEN BROUGHT BACK TO LIFE.
BUT, ON THE GROUND... IN THE MUD.
CLAY.
IT WAS CLAYFACE MIMICKING THE ROLE.
BUT... WHY MAKE JASON OLDER? A CORPSE DOESN'T AGE.
TO HIDE THE FLAWS. THEY COULDN'T BE SURE EXACTLY HOW JASON'S VOICE SOUNDED OR HOW HE MOVED AND FOUGHT --
--HE'D BEEN DEAD TOO LONG--
-- BUT CLAYFACE COULD MIMIC NIGHTWING. THAT'S WHY HIS ACROBATICS SEEMED SO FAMILIAR.
AND COPYING ME --?
-- WOULD HAVE BEEN JUST THAT. IF THE ILLUSION WAS GOING TO WORK, I HAD TO BE UNSURE.
YOUR MOVEMENTS ARE TOO RECENT -- TOO VIBRANT IN MY MIND.
I AM KIND OF UNIQUE, AREN'T I?
YOUR NECK...?
I'LL NEED STITCHES. BUT CATWOMAN GOT THE BLEEDING STOPPED.
SHE PROBABLY SAVED MY LIFE, YOU KNOW.
GO TO THE CAVE. HAVE ALFRED TEND TO YOUR WOUND.
THEN GET TO WORK ON THAT COSTUME.
SEE IF THERE'S ANYTHING ON IT OTHER THAN CLAY THAT WILL HELP US FIND OUT WHO IS BEHIND ALL THIS.

HUNTRESS IS GONE. SHE TOOK MY -- YOUR -- MOTORCYCLE.
I THOUGHT THAT SLEEPING JUICE YOU HAD ME STICK HER WITH WOULD KEEP HER OUT.
SHE'S BETTER THAN YOU THINK.
BETTER THAN EVERYONE THINKS, INCLUDING HERSELF.
IN HER RANTING, IT SOUNDED LIKE SHE MADE A DEAL WITH SOMEONE WHO BETRAYED HER.
YES. AND SHE MAY HAVE BETRAYED ME --
-- BUT WE CAN'T BE CERTAIN BECAUSE...
I KNOW.
I DIDN'T STAY WITH HER.
I DON'T LIKE TAKING ORDERS FROM YOU.
AND I DON'T LIKE BEING FOLLOWED. IF YOU DON'T TRUST ME...
BECAUSE THE PERSON OR PERSONS RESPONSIBLE ARE STILL OUT THERE.
I TRUST YOU.
FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH.
I'M GLAD IT WASN'T JASON.
I'M NOT.
OH...?


Coming here -- to Oracle's Clock Tower is closer than the Cave.
Catwoman will keep Jonathan Crane -- Scarecrow bound until the police arrive.
Clayface could be anywhere -- mixed with the water and the mud, the clay could travel down into the ground and re-form on the other side of Gotham.
I NEED TO FIND HUNTRESS.
-EEP-
DID MY DAD EVER GET USED TO YOUR SUDDEN APPEARING ACT?
SHE IS RIDING ONE OF THE BATBIKES.
WAS.
SHE DITCHED IT ABOUT TWO BLOCKS FROM WHERE YOU WERE.
SHE'S ALSO NOT WEARING A COMMUNICATOR. OR ANY OTHER KIND OF ELECTRONIC DEVICE I CAN TRACE.
LET ME KNOW WHEN YOU FIND HER.
SHE'S A LOOSE END...
...AND WHOEVER IT IS WE'RE DEALING WITH ISN'T GOING TO LET HER STAY OUT THERE FOR LONG.
BRUCE...
...AFTER YOUR FALL WHEN THE BATLINE WAS CUT. BACK IN THE BATCAVE...
...YOU WERE BARELY CONSCIOUS, SO MUCH SO YOU HAD TO USE MORSE CODE.
WHAT MADE YOU THINK OF TOMMY ELLIOT?
WHY?


I WAS JUST... CURIOUS.
HE WAS THE BEST SURGEON IN THE COUNTRY.
AS GOOD, IF NOT BETTER, THAN MY FATHER.
AND A CHILDHOOD FRIEND WHO IS NOW DEAD BECAUSE HE CAME BACK INTO MY LIFE.
THIS GOES BEYOND "CURIOUS."
YOU ASKED ME TO LOOK INTO THAT ELECTRONIC RELAY YOU FOUND HIDDEN UNDERNEATH YOUR COMPUTER IN THE CAVE.
AT FIRST I THOUGHT IT WAS A LISTENING DEVICE -- STANDARD C.I.A. OP KIND OF STUFF.
TURNS OUT IT WAS MADE TO LOOK LIKE THAT.
THE DESIGN WORK WAS FLAWLESS.
ANY IDEA WHOSE WORK IT IS?
I THINK I DO. I THINK YOU DO TOO OR YOU WOULDN'T HAVE ASKED ME.
I ROUTED THE DEVICE THROUGH THIS COMPUTER...
CLK
ENTER
...AND LOOK WHAT IT CAN DO...

BRIDGE CLOSED
It takes a few nights, but Oracle manages to arrange a meeting.
She has redirected the traffic. The Gotham City Bridge will be closed until six a.m.
It will not take that long for this to end.
I DIDN'T THINK YOU WOULD COME.
THAT SORT OF THING REQUIRES COURAGE.
WHY?
WHY BETRAY ME?
I WOULD HAVE GIVEN YOU ANYTHING YOU NEEDED.
I HAD GIVEN YOU ANYTHING YOU NEEDED.
A HOME. A PURPOSE.
WHAT THIRTY PIECES OF SILVER WAS PROMISED TO YOU?

HAROLD.
HAPPINESS.
When I first met Harold he was all alone. Friendless. Homeless. But gifted when it came to the repair of machines and electronics.
For a long time he worked in The Cave. Access to the cars, the computers. Always silent... in many ways, as alone as when I found him.
YOU CAN... SPEAK.
Through the years, I used all my resources to find a way to repair Harold's body.
But... medical science is not like crime. There is not always an answer.
THIS WAS SOMETHING FOR ME.
YOU HAD GIVEN ME SO MUCH.
I DIDN'T WANT TO ASK FOR ANYTHING MORE.
HE SAID HE COULD HEAL ME.
MAKE IT SO I WASN'T MUTE.
SO I COULD STAND UP LIKE A MAN.
I THOUGHT THAT EVEN IF I HAD BEEN TRICKED...
YOU ARE MY HERO.
YOU WOULD ALWAYS WIN...
FORGIVE ME...
HAROLD... I CAN FORGIVE YOU...
THE DESIRE TO BE HAPPY CAN BE VERY POWERFUL WHEN EXPLOITED.
HE KNEW WHO YOU WERE WITHOUT THE MASK.
HE KNEW ABOUT THE CAVE AND WHAT MY JOB WAS.
ALL HE ASKED WAS THAT I ADD THE CIRCUIT RELAY TO THE COMPUTER. I BUILT IT TO HIS SPECIFICATIONS, BUT I MADE SURE IT COULDN'T HURT YOU.
WHO APPROACHED YOU?
IT WAS --
BLAM
BLAM

WHAT IS A FRIEND?
A SINGLE SOUL DWELLING IN TWO BODIES...
To Be CONCLUDED!

DC IN DEMAND

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This Month's Cover by...
JIM LEE AND SCOTT WILLIAMS
COLORS BY ALEX SINCLAIR

Next Month in...

Batman #619

The year's biggest mystery reaches a shocking climax in the long-awaited finale of "Hush!" By Loeb, Lee and Williams.

JLA: LIBERTY AND JUSTICE (November, 2003)

The World's Greatest Heroes come together in an epic story by two of comics' greatest creators, Emmy Award-winning writer **Paul Dini** and acclaimed painter **Alex Ross**. In JLA: LIBERTY AND JUSTICE, the original members of the Justice League confront an alien menace so large it takes 96 oversized pages of action and adventure to contain it! Truly, this fully-painted graphic novel will be the *biggest* comics event of 2003!

The Hot List THIS MONTH

SUPERMAN/BATMAN #1

A new series by the all-star team of Jeph Loeb, Ed McGuinness and Dexter Vines that reunites the "World's Finest" team in one high-octane book!

BATMAN: DEATH AND THE MAIDENS #1 (OF 9)

Eisner Award-nominated writer Greg Rucka teams up with legendary artist Klaus Janson for a mini-series that pits Batman against one of his greatest foes: Ra's al Ghul!

DOCTOR FATE #1 (OF 5)

A new miniseries spotlighting the JSA's mysterious golden-helmeted hero! Hector Hall moves to Salem, Massachusetts in an effort to lead a normal life...but soon Caitlin Bibeau and her angry ex-boyfriend come to town, bringing with them a centuries-old menace from ancient Egypt!

THE FLASH #201

A bold new beginning for The Flash, as new series artist Alberto Dose makes his debut! In the aftermath of the most horrific attack on The Flash ever, the Scarlet Speedster is nowhere to be found!

CAT-TALES AND BIRD FABLES

Big creative changes are coming in the Bat-family of books. First, **Paul Gulacy** and **Jimmy Palmiotti** (of WildStorm's RELOAD fame) give CATWOMAN an artistic facelift when Selina Kyle returns to her roots in Gotham's East End with issue #25. The artwork breaks away from the series style established by **Darwyn Cooke**, but don't expect writer **Ed Brubaker** to pussyfoot around the noir, action and intrigue that already makes this one of the sexiest and best-written comics today.

Switching from cat-o'-nine-*tales* to fables of another sort, Eisner award-nominated writer **Bill Willingham** and acclaimed ZATANNA artist **Rick Mays** will provide ROBIN with a new look and direction beginning in issue #121., The dynamic creative duo enroll Tim Drake in a new school, establish a new supporting cast, make his training under Batman tougher than ever, and introduce Johnny Warlock, a very bad guy who might literally make life a living hell for the Boy Wonder.

100 BATARANGS?

Following up on **Brian Azzarello** and **Eduardo Risso's** plans for BATMAN when they begin their series run with issue #620, we've learned their storyline is called "Broken City." We also hear the title proves very relevant for Batman, whose investigation of a brutal murder forces him to confront some harsh realities he *wouldn't* want you to see. Check out the first chapter in October!

To get more of DC in Demand's Inside Scoop, go to www.dccomics.com/dcindemand right now!

BLOOD TIES

SUPERMAN: BLOOD OF MY ANCESTORS, due out in September, is a book of firsts and, sadly, lasts. This story takes the Last Son of Krypton back to the genesis of the ancestral house of El, the earliest Kryptonian age ever seen in current Superman continuity. It also represents the final work of celebrated artist **Gil Kane,** who also co-wrote the story with **Steven Grant.** The story was completed by fellow renowned illustrator **John Buscema** shortly before he too passed away. Inked entirely by **Kevin Nowlan** (who last inked Kane on SUPERMAN: DISTANT FIRES), this Prestige Format one-shot serves as an unforgettable tribute to both artistic legends.

DARWYN'S THEORY

We can hardly contain ourselves after overhearing master storyteller **Darwyn Cooke** (CATWOMAN: SELINA'S BIG SCORE) tell Editor **Mark Chiarello** about DCU: NEW FRONTIER – a six-issue miniseries that will explore the dawn of comics' Silver Age and embrace the core truths of the DC Universe. With major plans for just about *everyone* in the DCU, including Hal Jordan, The Challengers of the Unknown, Suicide Squad, The Losers, Superman, Wonder Woman, The Flash and Martian Manhunter, we *strongly* advise that you check out what's "Cooke-in" in DCU: NEW FRONTIER early next year!

– your MOLE at 1700

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BATMAN 618, October, 2003. Published monthly by DC Comics, 1700 Broadway, New York, NY 10019. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to BATMAN, DC Comics Subscriptions, P.O. Box 0528, Baldwin, NY 11510. Annual subscription rate (12 issues) $27.00. Canadian subscribers must add $12.00 for postage and GST. GST # is R125921072. All foreign countries must add $12.00 for postage. U.S. funds only. Copyright © 2003 DC Comics. All Rights Reserved. All characters featured in this issue, the distinctive likenesses thereof and related indicia are trademarks of DC Comics. The stories, characters and incidents mentioned in this magazine are entirely fictional. Printed on recyclable paper. DC Comics does not read or accept unsolicited submissions of ideas, stories or artwork.
Printed in Canada.

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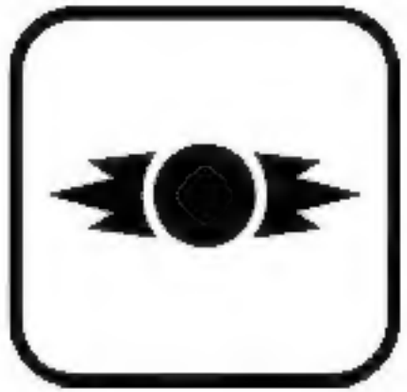

MINUTEMEN
SCANS